

Message Text

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73

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4795

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 1583

EXDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SP

SUBJECT: ARMY ATTITUDE TOWARD POLITICAL EVOLUTION

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER AREILZA MORNING FEBRUARY 29, I ASKED HIM ABOUT REPORTS WHICH WE HAVE HEARD THAT CERTAIN SENIOR MEMBERS OF ARMY HIERACHYN CONCERNED BY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, HAVE WARNED FRAGA TO SLOW DOWN HIS POLITICAL PROGRAM.

2. AREILZA SAID THERE WAS NO SUCH THING AS "ARMY HIERARCHY". THERE WERE CERTAIN SENIOR OFFICERS WHO WERE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT CHANGE AND MAY WANT TO GO SLOWER. HE MENTIONED PARTICULARLY LIEUT, GENERAL ALVAREZ-ARENAS (ARMY MINISTER) AND MAJOR GENERAL MILANS DEL BOSCH (EHO COMMANDS ARMORED DIVISION IN MADRID AREA). AT THE SAME TIME HE COULD ASSURE ME THERE WAS NO FOUNDATION TO RUMORS THAT A MILITARY COUP MIGHT BE IN OFFING. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT IF KING ORDERED A SENIOR OFFICER TRANSFERRED FROM MADRID BECAUSE HE WAS TALKING TOO MUCH, THAT OFFICER WOULD GO AND NOTHING WOULD HAPPEN, NOT EVEN HIS AIDE WOULD FOLLOW.

3. AREILZA SAID THE GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO PURSUE ITS PROGRAM. SINCE ARIAS WAS NOT MUCH OF A LEADER AND NEVER WANTED TO GET TOO FAR OUT IN FRONT, IT FELL TO FRAGA INTERNALLY AND AREILZA EXTERNALLY TO EXPLAIN EXACTLY WHAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO DO. THIS MIGHT NOT BE
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THE BEST WAY OF PROCEEDING, BUT THERE WAS NOT OTHER WAY.

GIVEN ARIAS' RELUCTANCE TO PLAY THE LEADERSHIP ROLE.
STABLER

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